



The Future of Broward County's Urban Water Supplies

On December 11, 2002 President Clinton signed into law the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000. This landmark legislation establishes the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) as a framework stating: "The over arching objective of the Comprehensive Plan is the restoration, preservation and protection of the South Florida ecosystem while providing for other water related needs of the region."

The Board of County Commissioners of Broward County has a long history of support for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Over the past few years, the Board has approved federal and state legislative policies and adopted resolutions supporting the CERP, Water Preserve Areas/East Coast Buffer, Critical Projects and WRDA. The County's 2001 Federal Legislative Policy states "The Broward County Board of County Commissioners supports the recently passed WRDA and believes that the implementation of the CERP is critical to the future of South Florida and Broward County's environment, economy, and water supply."

Furthermore for almost a decade, Broward County representatives have participated in the development of the plan through the Governor's Commission for the Everglades and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Working Group and other advisory groups to maintain a balanced approach to Everglades Restoration.

Broward County's urban water supply provides for the urban environmental restoration and preservation, maintenance of surface and ground water levels, saltwater intrusion abatement, potable water and all other urban water uses. Local rainfall supplies the major portion of Broward's urban water with the Central and Southern Florida Project (CSFP) supplying a lesser but essential portion. The CERP and the Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan (LECRWSP) were developed to re-engineer the CSFP to propose adequate water supplies for both the Everglades and the urban areas. Unfortunately, major initial CERP projects that were to have increased water availability have been delayed. This may create a potential struggle between user groups for the limited existing water supplies.

In an effort to help resolve CERP related issues, Broward County staff are working to foster a coalition of interest groups to share information and work toward consensus positions. Meetings have recently been held with environmental groups, stakeholders and SFWMD staff. Efforts are underway to involve the Technical Advisory Committee of the Water Advisory Board and the Water Advisory Board, an organization of County and municipal leaders.

Toward the goal of helping to keep CERP implementation moving forward in a balanced way and to help meet Broward County's urban water resource (supply) needs, Broward County staff seeks support for the following recommendations:



Do No Harm:

Historic water flows must be continued through seepage and surface deliveries to Broward County. The District is developing baseline numbers which must reflect these historic flows. This means CERP and actions taken under Ch. 373 and WRDA should do no harm to the County's historic baseline consistent with state and federal law. Furthermore, the County's needs must include water for abatement of saltwater intrusion, wetland restoration and preservation, waterway and aquifer recharge, and potable consumption. These requirements are important to help ensure a healthy urban ecosystem for all urban uses, including permitted potable water supply. In addition, whatever projects or decisions the District proceeds with must demonstrate no impact to the County's baseline.

☐ **Baseline Accuracy:**

The baseline must be as accurate as possible understanding that over time more powerful modeling tools will be able to improve accuracy. Baseline numbers provided to Broward County need to be accurate enough for design purposes. It is important that Broward County never receive less water than determined for the initial baseline. Decisions will be based on the initial baseline.

☐ **Funding:**

Budgetary constraints placed on the South Florida Water Management District by CERP and the Legislature negatively impact the ability of the District to meet its fiscal responsibilities under Chapter 373, Florida Statutes. These include funds to develop and construct water resource development projects. The District's ability to help fund alternative water supply development should be maximized and legislation should be considered to help create a fair and equitable funding source to assist local governments impacted by CERP implementation. Broward County staff are committed to helping develop broad support, including the environmental and water utility interests, toward developing a funding source to meet unmet needs of user groups. The District and the County must make an aggressive effort to seek funds from the District and Legislature during budget and legislative processes as needs emerge.

Broward County continues its long standing support of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. However, CERP cannot supplant the South Florida Water Management District's existing responsibility to implement Chapter 373 including water resource development, flood protection and water quality protection.

☐ **Integrated Water Resource Plan:**

The District and Broward County must continue support for the Broward County IWRP which will optimize efficient use of current water resources and help determine the methods of addressing future water needs.

Broward County Staff Requests:

Broward County must be able to adequately assess the water resource impacts of the federal and state actions and plan for future water supplies to maintain a healthy urban ecosystem and economy. To that end, the following is requested from the South Florida Water Management District:

- A 2000 Baseline that can be used as a legal measure of water availability and requirements should be completed by the agreed upon date of August 2002. The development of a planning baseline and a legal baseline on separate tracks, as currently proposed by the SFWMD, must not delay the County's ability to plan for future infrastructure improvements. In order to make substantial future financial commitments, it is important that the baseline be sufficiently accurate for utility planning for the next 20 to 40 years.
- Broward County staff be involved in all decisions related to the development of the Baseline, including and especially modeling efforts.
- The District provide regional model results by October 2002 that depict the impacts of the 2000 baseline. The model should compare (1) historic deliveries based on 2000 regulations and (2) historic deliveries based on pre-2000 regulations for the past 36 year period or record. Furthermore, the District work cooperatively with Broward County by sharing information and resources to develop a county wide integrated surface ground water model sufficient to meet the needs of the County and the District.
- Assurances that the CERP will be implemented in a balanced manner consistent with state and federal law.
- By 2003 develop a water availability rule consistent with WRDA 2000 Section 601(h)(5).

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